CHURCHILL, MANITOBA
Statistical Outline

POLAR
PAM
5260
POLARPAM

CHURCHILL, MANITOBA - Statistical Outline

LOCATION: 58°45' N 94°11' W

inside line of continuous permafrost
just north of edge of forest belt
on shores of Hudson Bay
1,000 rail miles northeast of Winnipeg: terminus of Hudson Bay Railway from The Pas
85 miles south of Manitoba - NWT boundary

NAME: In honour of Lord John Churchill, first Duke of Marlborough in 1685 by English Captain that first explored the Churchill River

POPULATION:

4,460 (1968 estimate - Government of Manitoba)
2,168 (1951)
3,932 (1961)

ethnic origins:

British	33.1%
Indian & Eskimo	32.8%
French	9.0%
Ukranian	5.8%
Scandanavian	5.3%

Fort Churchill - about 2,000, about 250 of whom are Eskimo students

Town of Churchill - about 1,200
- about 1,000 white
- about 200 Indian and Métis
- about 107 Eskimo

Dene Village - band list, 340
- about 260 residents

The Flats - about 180, mostly Métis

Akudlik - about 160 Eskimo
- about 100 (tentative) white

CLIMATE:

	Jan.	July	Yearly
mean daily	-19.0°F	53.7°F	
highest temperature			96°F
lowest temperature			-57°F
mean rainfall		2.19 in.	10.27 in.
mean snowfall	4.8 in.		56.9 in.

mean number of frost-free days per year is 79 (less than any other major settlement in the Canadian Arctic)
high winds result in January wind chill temperature of about -35°F

MEDIA:

Newspaper - Beluga Banner (weekly)
T.V. - CHGH - community owned and operated
Radio - CHFC - CBC - Fort Churchill

01625

/.....2

ACCESS:

Road - only as far as Thompson
Rail - CNR - 3 weekly, Tuesday, Thursday & Saturday
Water - deep water port open 3 to 4 months per year
Air - TransAir - daily to Thompson & Winnipeg
- occassionally to Yellowknife
- charter - TransAir: DC3, 4, 5, 6, TS11, Hawker Siddeley
- LambAir: Beaver, Otter, Cessna 180

MEDICAL:

2 public health nurses
Fort Churchill - municipal hospital, 46 beds
1 ambulance
3 doctors (no home visits)
1 dentist
visiting specialists
Canadian National Institute for the Blind

EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES:

Churchill - 1 school, grades 1 - 6
Fort Churchill - Hearne Hall, grades 7 - 9 (Administered by Churchill)
- Duke of Edinburgh, grades kindergarten to 6, 10 to 12
- Churchill Vocational Centre - 3 year vocational course for Eskimo teenagers. In 1967 it had 234 students, 17 teachers and 14 administrative supervisors.

WATER:

Source - Churchill River and reservoir
- treatment - none reported
Distribution - in summer by pipe above ground covered with 4 feet of moss, topped by corrugated iron
- in winter, melted snow and ice
Sewage treatment - none reported

CHURCHILL

History and Development

About one thousand years ago, aboriginal man reached the shores of Hudson Bay; the Eskimo from the north and west, the Indians from the southwest. The white man arrived in the 17th century; Henry Hudson entered the Bay in 1610, followed by Jens Munk who camped at the mouth of the Churchill River in 1619. The English claimed the Bay in 1670 when they granted the Royal Charter to the "Governor and Company of Gentlement and Adventurers trading into Hudson Bay". The first fort was built in 1689 by Kelsey, soon burned and was rebuilt in 1717 on the west bank of the river, about 4 1/2 miles from the mouth.

The town was built on serviceable garden soil, but most of the area can support only the pioneer species, willows, juniper bushes, lichen, mosses and several varieties of wild flowers. Early documents state that cattle and horses were once kept in Churchill and that gardens were cultivated, producing potatoes, turnips, radishes and carrots. Hay was also grown.

The French challenge of control of the Bay in the 18th century led to the construction of Fort Prince of Wales. In spite of its impressive size and armaments, the French captured and partly destroyed it in 1782. The remains still exist.

The railway extension from The Pas was completed in 1929. This ended Churchill's isolation from the rest of the country except in the short summer months when the harbour was free of ice. About the same time, work was started on the harbour and port facilities. When the port opened in 1931, the grain elevator capacity was 2.5 million bushels. The deep water dock that was constructed was 1,855 feet long, enough to accommodate four ships.

During WWII, Churchill became the centre of defense of northern Canada. Fort Churchill installation and airfield were constructed 7 1/2 miles east of the townsite. After the war, the base was used by both the American and Canadian Military Forces for cold weather testing and training. In the late 1950's and early '60's, it served as an air to air refueling base for the U.S. Air Force Strategic Air Command.

Settlement Pattern

The Churchill area is made up of five individual settlements. There are wide variations in housing conditions, levels of servicing and social structure between these communities.

Fort Churchill is the largest, located four miles east of the town. The area has been administered by the Federal Department of Public Works since 1964. The Fort includes the Churchill Research Range, the Department of National Health & Welfare, the Department of Public Works, the Department of Transport and the Postal Service.

The town of Churchill grew as a result of the Hudson's Bay post, and the rail and harbour facilities. With the installation of the Fort, its importance as a service centre was greatly increased.

The Flats is a settlement of Métis and Cree and a few Whites. It is located just south of the railway and town site along the river.

Dene Village is a newly created settlement located between the Fort and the Town site. It is inhabitated by Chipewyans who were relocated by the government from their settlement 150 miles north in Duck Lake in the Barren Lands.

Akudlik is an Eskimo settlement that also includes a few whites. The smallest of the settlements, it is located just north of Dene Village. The name means "half-way house" in Eskimo.

Economic Structure

The basic employment in Churchill in 1968 breaks down as follows:

Churchill Research Range	240
Dept. of Transport and others	40
Dept. of Indian Affairs & Northern Development	66
Hospital	37
Other government agencies	30
National Harbours Board	13
C.N.R.	32
Regional airways	22
Hunting & Fishing	30
	560

plus "non-basic" employment of about an additional 700.

The Churchill Research Range is the largest employer with about 240 full-time employees in 1969. Operation of the range is handled under contract by Pan American World Airways. The Range is managed by the National Research Council's Space Research Facilities Branch in co-operation with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) of the United States. The reasons for locating the center in Churchill include:

(a) Churchill lies in the centre of the Northern Hemisphere's zone of maximum auroral activity.

(b) The Arctic Basin serves as the breeding ground for most of the Northern Hemisphere's weather systems.

(c) Hudson Bay provides an excellent unpopulated impact area for spent rockets.

(d) Churchill is the only location with the Auroral Zone accessible by land, sea and air.

There has recently been an announcement that the contract for operations between NASA and NRC will expire on June 30th, 1970, and the NRC will continue to operate at a much reduced range of activity. Employment would drop from 240 to about 40; number of rocket firings from 254 to 10 or 15. This will have a severe impact on the economy, as the Range is not only the largest employer, but maintains the highest paid group in the community. The reduction would greatly affect the service-oriented employment in the town. A series of alternatives are being considered by the Government of Manitoba to strengthen the economy.

/.....3

The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development bases its eastern Arctic headquarters for northern administration in Akudlik. These headquarters serve about 3,000 people, Eskimo and White, in the Keewatin district of the Northwest Territories. The settlement also provides a transitional experience for Eskimos coming from the north.

The Northern Administration Branch employs about 90, of whom 60 are involved in education. It operates the Duke of Edinburgh school which provides primary schooling for the Fort and secondary classes for the whole area. It also runs the Eskimo training centre which provides residence facilities and pre-vocational and vocational schooling. The Northern Administration Branch is scheduled for eventual transferral to the Territories.

The Indian Affairs Branch also has separate programmes for the 300 Chipewyans and 30 Cree Indians in the settlement.

There are about 129 other government employees, either Federal or Provincial. They work in the hospital, in welfare, in health services, telephone, hydro, R.C.M.P., CBC, Post Office and others.

The port of Churchill is another major source of employment. It is administered by the National Harbours Board which maintains the right to hold property and to direct services. The Board is a permanent Crown Corporation responsible to the Minister of Transport.

The navigation season for overseas vessels extends from July 23rd to October 20th or about 80 days. A government icebreaker and an Aerial Ice Patrol provide information and protection to reduce ice damage to ships. Two harbour tugs assist the ships in the harbour. An expansion programme in the early '60's improved harbour size and facilities. The wharf is now over 3,000 feet long, with five deep sea berths. The grain elevator with a storage capacity of 5 million bushels can load 3 ships simultaneously. A grain cargo of 11,000 tons can be loaded in less than 8 hours. The number of ships entering the harbour has slowly and steadily decreased: in 1959 there were 58 vessels; in 1963 there were 48; in 1968 there were 34. The volume of grain shipped in these years has remained almost constant: in 1959, over 21.5 million bushels; in 1963, over 22.5 million bushels; in 1968 over 22.5 million bushels.

Wheat accounts for 95% to 100% of all shipments. Imports are negligible, eliminating the cost advantage of two-way shipping.

The port employs about 45 person full-time increasing seasonally to about 160.

Other major employers in town include the rail and air transportation companies. The Churchill Whale Products company provides seasonal employment, as do the Eskimo and Indian Craft shops. Other groups to be found in Churchill include two beauty shops, a florist but no funeral parlour and 2 upholsterers as well as a theatre, 2 bowling alleys and a billiard parlour. The greatest tourist attraction is sport whaling for white Belugas. A tourist brochure enthuses that "the chase is carried out from freight canoes travelling at full throttle and it's no sport for the faint-hearted".

/.....4

Dene Village and The Flats

The preceeding discussion of the economic structure virtually excludes the communities of Dene Village and The Flats which are severely depressed and socially disorganized to a terrible and obvious extent.

Information on the Métis settlement in The Flats of 69 families is scarce. Figures show that of a total population of 366, there are about 160 on welfare (with some seasonal variation). Twenty-eight people only have permanent jobs, and a further ten have regular seasonal jobs. Of those employed, the average annual salary is about $4,000. They report two high school graduates in the community, none going to university. About 40 people own their own homes, only 5 own their lots. All the houses are frame; none have basements or cement foundations. About 5 of the houses in The Flats have electricity but none have running water.

The history of the people of Dene Village is described by Phil Dickman, the Community Development Worker in Churchill in an article published in the Musk-Ox*.

The original Duck Lake settlement was based on hunting and trapping and dependent on a Hudson's Bay post. When the post closed, the Federal Government encouraged the people to relocate in Churchill, offering housing, jobs and education. There was no formal organization of the Indians in Duck Lake as the people were so often on the move, so there was no representative body to make the decision to relocate. The Indian Affairs Branch sent in a plane in 1957 to transport the families. There was not enough room for boats or dogs and sleds - the mainstay of their economy - so they were abandonned. The Town site was not ready, so the band settled in temporary quarters in Camp 10.

The houses that were built for them by the government were replicas of southern suburbia: 2 entrances, high ceilings, many rooms with floor to ceiling partitions and picture-windows. They are built close together in case of future servicing. These are envied by others in Churchill but apparently hated by the Indians. They are used to small houses, low for protection from the winds and spaced well apart for privacy. They have no furniture to fill the large rooms, no means to replace the $40 to $80 picture windows which are a prime target for drunken frustration. The ceiling partitions, windows, 2 doors but no porches, and house construction make futile efforts of a Quebec heater and temporarily free coal. The people came to Churchill speaking no English, entirely unprepared psychologically and vocationally to compete for jobs in the town. Within ten years, the group has lost their traditional way of life: they are not in any way equipped to cope with the new way of life, their values and beliefs are such that they do not wish to try. There was no liquor in the Duck Lake settlement. Twelve years later there is extreme drunkeness, prostitution and vandalism. It is almost completely alienated from the rest of Churchill and is the source of most of the lawlessness.

The Dene Village community is a harsh reminder that more knowledge is required to prevent such disintegration in future.

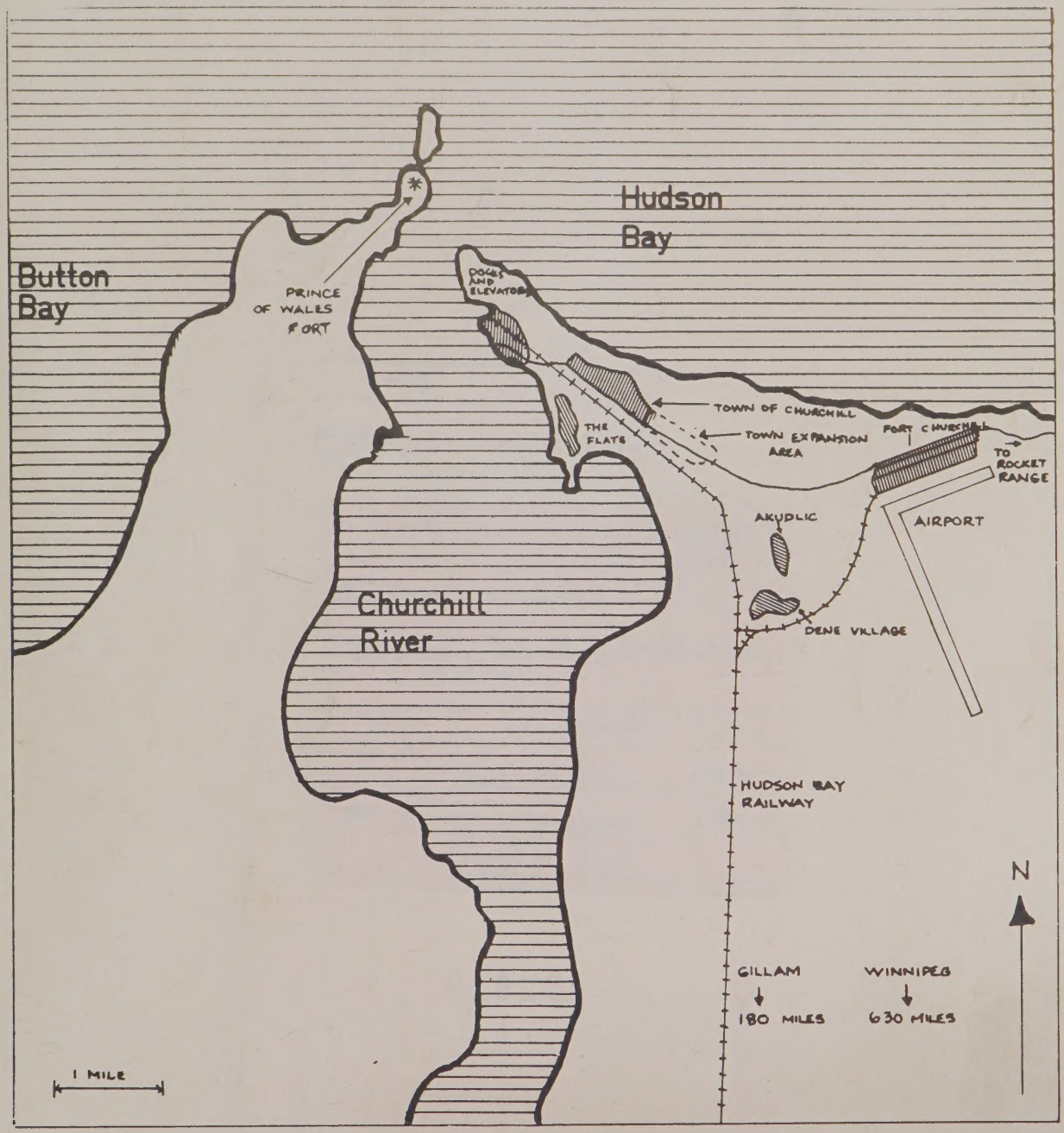
* - "Thoughts on Relocation" in The Musk-Ox, ed. Dr. R. M. Bone University of Saskatchewan, volume 21, #6.

/.....5

Proposal for Research Centre

The Department of Industry and Commerce of the Government of Manitoba has drafted a proposal to the Federal Government for the establishment of a Northern Research Centre in Churchill. This could provide both grants and facilities to encourage northern research. Churchill is proposed because of its rail, sea and air access; its proximity to two different environments, the Barren Lands and the transitional forest; the facilities of the Research Range are already there and probably soon to be abandonned. Funding should be provided mainly from the Federal Government, with the Government of Manitoba, private foundations and private industry supplying the balance.

See also: Churchill Development Plan, Phase I, prepared by Murray V. Jones & Associates Ltd., February 1968.



Map of Churchill and Environs

Date Due

APR 31 72

MAR 18 '73

MAR 25 '74

01625

Pam:711.42(2)
[Churchill]
MCC

Mid-Canada Conference
AUTHOR

Churchill, Manitoba: statistical
TITLE outline.

University of Alberta Library
0 1620 0337 4111